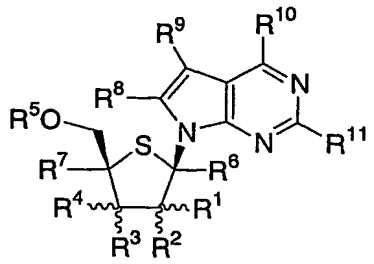
WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A compound of the structural formula I:



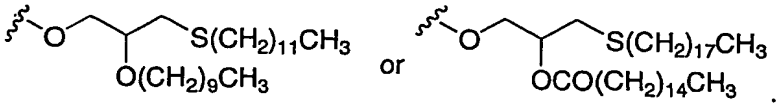
(I)

or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof;
wherein R^1 is C_{1-4} alkyl, wherein alkyl is unsubstituted or substituted with hydroxy, amino, C_{1-4} alkoxy, C_{1-4} alkylthio, or one to three fluorine atoms;
R^2 is amino, fluorine, hydroxy, mercapto, C_{1-4} alkoxy, or C_{1-10} alkylcarbonyloxy;
R^3 and R^4 are each independently selected from the group consisting of hydrogen, cyano, azido, halogen, hydroxy, mercapto, amino, C_{1-4} alkoxy, C_{1-10} alkylcarbonyloxy, C_{2-4} alkenyl, C_{2-4} alkynyl, and C_{1-4} alkyl, wherein alkyl is unsubstituted or substituted with hydroxy, amino, C_{1-4} alkoxy, C_{1-4} alkylthio, or one to three fluorine atoms;
R^5 is hydrogen, C_{1-10} alkylcarbonyl, $P_3O_9H_4$, $P_2O_6H_3$, or $P(O)R^{13}R^{14}$;
R^6 and R^7 are each independently hydrogen, methyl, hydroxymethyl, or fluoromethyl;
R^8 is hydrogen, C_{1-4} alkyl, C_{2-4} alkynyl, halogen, cyano, carboxy, C_{1-4} alkyloxycarbonyl, azido, amino, C_{1-4} alkylamino, di(C_{1-4} alkyl)amino, hydroxy, C_{1-6} alkoxy, C_{1-6} alkylthio, C_{1-6} alkylsulfonyl, or (C_{1-4} alkyl)$_{0-2}$ aminomethyl;
R^9 is hydrogen, cyano, nitro, C_{1-3} alkyl, $NHCONH_2$, $CONR^{12}R^{12}$, $CSNR^{12}R^{12}$, $COOR^{12}$, $C(=NH)NH_2$, hydroxy, C_{1-3} alkoxy, amino, C_{1-4} alkylamino, di(C_{1-4} alkyl)amino, halogen, (1,3-oxazol-2-yl), (1,3-thiazol-2-yl), or (imidazol-2-yl); wherein alkyl is unsubstituted or substituted with one to three groups independently selected from halogen, amino, hydroxy, carboxy, and C_{1-3} alkoxy;
R^{10} and R^{11} are each independently hydrogen, hydroxy, halogen, C_{1-4} alkoxy, amino, C_{1-4} alkylamino, di(C_{1-4} alkyl)amino, C_{3-6} cycloalkylamino, di(C_{3-6}

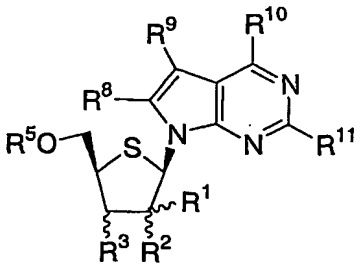
cycloalkyl)amino, or C_{4-6} cycloheteroalkyl, unsubstituted or substituted with one to two groups independently selected from halogen, hydroxy, amino, C_{1-4} alkyl, and C_{1-4} alkoxy;

each R^{12} is independently hydrogen or C_{1-6} alkyl; and

R^{13} and R^{14} are each independently hydroxy, $OCH_2CH_2SC(=O)C_{1-4}$ alkyl, $OCH_2O(C=O)OC_{1-4}$ alkyl, $NHCHMeCO_2Me$, $OCH(C_{1-4}$ alkyl$)O(C=O)C_{1-4}$ alkyl,



2. The compound of Claim 1 of the structural formula II:



(II)

or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof;

wherein

R^1 is C_{1-3} alkyl, wherein alkyl is unsubstituted or substituted with hydroxy, amino, C_{1-3} alkoxy, C_{1-3} alkylthio, or one to three fluorine atoms;

R^2 is hydroxy, fluoro, C_{1-3} alkoxy, or C_{1-8} alkylcarbonyloxy;

R^3 is hydrogen, halogen, hydroxy, amino, C_{1-3} alkoxy, or C_{1-8} alkylcarbonyloxy;

R^5 is hydrogen, C_{1-8} alkylcarbonyl, $P_3O_9H_4$, $P_2O_6H_3$, or PO_3H_2;

R^8 is hydrogen, amino, or C_{1-4} alkylamino;

R^9 is hydrogen, cyano, methyl, halogen, or $CONH_2$; and

R^{10} and R^{11} are each independently hydrogen, halogen, hydroxy, amino, C_{1-4} alkylamino, di(C_{1-4} alkyl)amino, or C_{3-6} cycloalkylamino.

3. The compound of Claim 2 wherein
R^1 is methyl, fluoromethyl, hydroxymethyl, difluoromethyl, trifluoromethyl, or aminomethyl;
R^2 is hydroxy, fluoro, or methoxy;
R^3 is hydrogen, fluoro, hydroxy, amino, or methoxy;
R^5 is hydrogen or $P_3O_9H_4$;
R^8 is hydrogen or amino;
R^9 is hydrogen, cyano, methyl, halogen, or $CONH_2$; and
R^{10} and R^{11} are each independently hydrogen, fluoro, hydroxy, or amino.

4. The compound of Claim 3 which is
4-amino-7-(2-*C*-methyl-4-thio-β-D-ribofuranosyl)-7*H*-pyrrolo[2,3-*d*]pyrimidine or
2-amino-7-(2-*C*-methyl-4-thio-β-D-ribofuranosyl)-7*H*-pyrrolo[2,3-*d*]pyrimidin-4(3*H*)-one;
and the corresponding 5'-triphosphates;
or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof.

5. A pharmaceutical composition comprising a compound of Claim 1 and a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier.

6. The pharmaceutical composition of Claim 5 useful for inhibiting RNA-dependent RNA viral polymerase, inhibiting RNA-dependent RNA replication, and/or treating RNA-dependent RNA viral infection.

7. The pharmaceutical composition of Claim 6 wherein said RNA-dependent RNA viral polymerase is HCV NS5B polymerase, said RNA-dependent RNA viral replication is HCV replication, and said RNA-dependent RNA viral infection is HCV infection.

8. A method of inhibiting RNA-dependent RNA viral polymerase and/or inhibiting RNA-dependent RNA viral replication comprising administering to a mammal in need of such inhibition an effective amount of a compound according to Claim 1.

9. The method of Claim 8 wherein said RNA-dependent RNA viral polymerase is HCV NS5B polymerase and said RNA-dependent RNA viral replication is HCV viral replication.

10. A method of treating RNA-dependent RNA viral infection comprising administering to a mammal in need of such treatment an effective amount of a compound according to Claim 1.

11 The method of Claim 10 wherein said RNA-dependent RNA viral infection is HCV infection.

12. The method of Claim 11 in combination with a therapeutically effective amount of another agent active against HCV.

13. The method of Claim 12 wherein said agent active against HCV is ribavirin; levovirin; thymosin alpha-1; interferon-β; an inhibitor of NS3 serine protease; an inhibitor of inosine monophosphate dehydrogenase; interferon-α or pegylated interferon-α, alone or in combination with ribavirin or levovirin.

14. The method of Claim 13 wherein said agent active against HCV is interferon-α or pegylated interferon-α, alone or in combination with ribavirin.

15. Use of a compound of Claim 1 for the inhibition of RNA-dependent RNA viral polymerase or inhibition of RNA-dependent RNA viral replication in a mammal.

16. Use of a compound of Claim 1 for treatment of RNA-dependent RNA viral infection in a mammal.

17. The use of Claim 16 wherein said RNA-dependent RNA viral infection is hepatitis C infection.

18. Use of a compound of Claim 1 in the manufacture of a medicament for the inhibition of RNA-dependent RNA viral polymerase or the inhibition of RNA-dependent RNA viral replication in a mammal.

19. Use of a compound of Claim 1 in the manufacture of a medicament for treatment of RNA-dependent RNA viral infection in a mammal.

20. The use of Claim 19 wherein said RNA-dependent RNA viral infection is hepatitis C infection.